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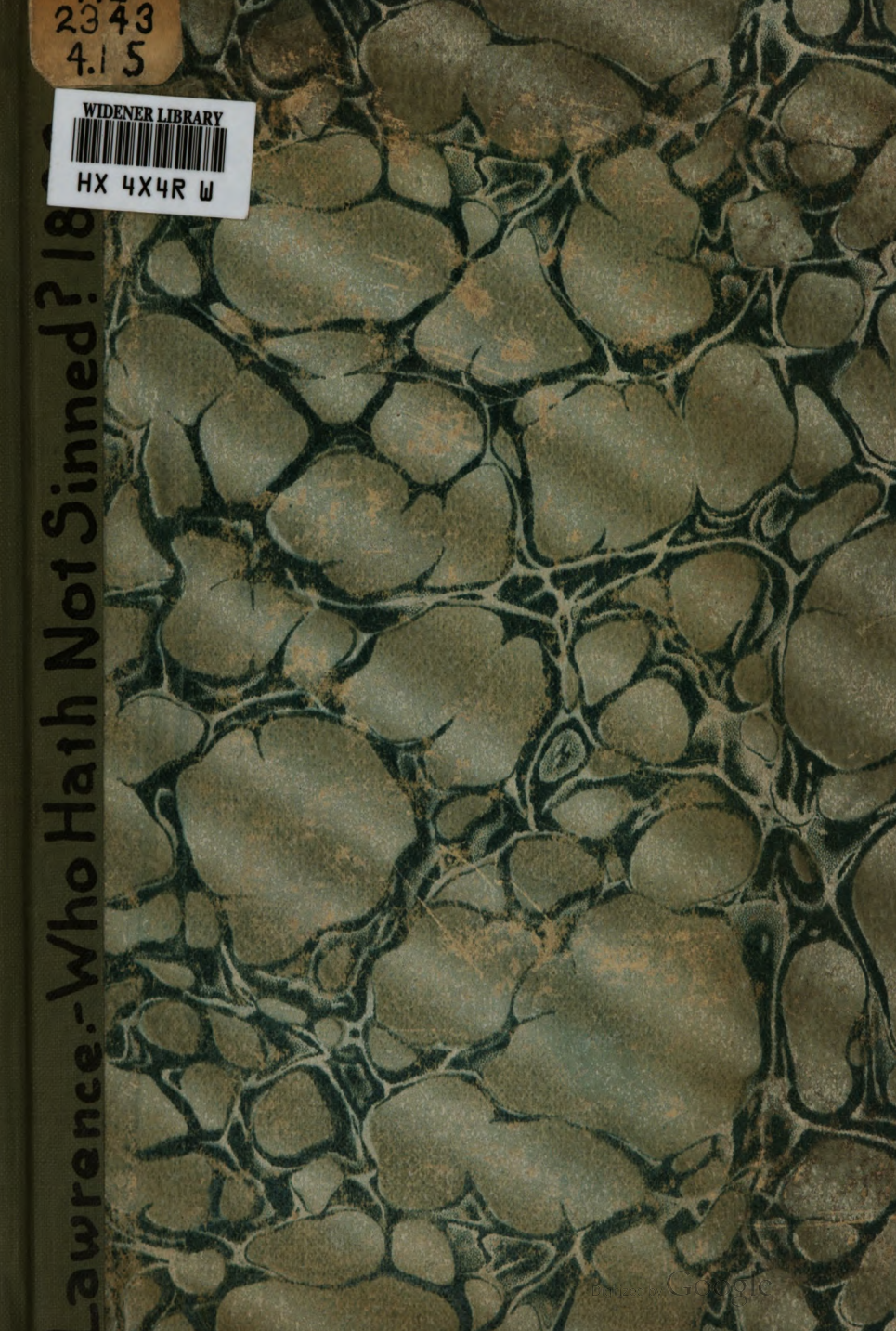

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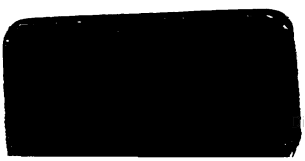

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WHO HATH NOT SINNED?

BY

LILLIAN LAWRENCE,

OF THE

CASTLE SQUARE THEATRE COMPANY

Author of

"A Fatal Glance," and other stories

BOSTON:

HUB PUBLISHING CO.,

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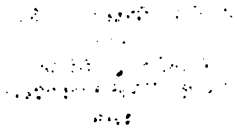

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PREFACE.

That an actress could find time to write stories is a subject which has been discussed widely since the appearance of "A Fatal Glance," and "Who Had not Sinned," both from the pen of Miss Lillian Lawrence, of the Castle Square Theatre Stock Company. The author has had much experience in this line of work. Many magazines and other publications having in the past contained stories written by her when she was living in California. Her great popularity and artistic worth as an actress have won a firm place in the affections of the theatregoing public of the entire country and the following is loyal to the extreme. A brief announcement that stories would appear from time to time in the Boston Dramatic Review, furnished by this clever leading lady was sufficient to cause a large sale of the paper. The demand for these stories in book form increased as the chapters were published.

Miss Lawrence is a hardworking, studious woman. When others may be idle she is employed with part or pen and has developed, as is well known, a talent for story telling that has won her an enviable reputation. She numbers among her friends many men of letters and prominent society people who eagerly avail themselves of the opportunity of meeting this brilliant woman.

There are few leading women upon the stage today who have had the experience that has been the case with Miss Lawrence. Her career is one of more than ordinary import, and the period dates back to when she was but twelve years of age. She was born in Alexandria, Va., but her childhood was

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spent in San Francisco. Manager Charles E. Lacke, of the Bush Street Theatre, made application to the school superintendent for permission to borrow some thirty children to play the chess game in "The Royal Middy." Miss Lawrence was chosen for the queen's knight, and as such she appeared for the first time upon the stage. She sang in opera for three years, in the company of which Emily Melleville was prima donna. Her voice gave out soon after, and she decided upon a stage career. In the Oakland, Cal., stock company she remained for a number of seasons, leaving the stage for two years after. San Diego and Portland, Oregon, in the Cordway stock, next saw the coming leading woman, and her early training was such that while not as laborious work as the present, she created new parts each week and won much praise for her work.

Miss Lawrence had seen the travelling companies from the East, and soon decided to make the trip. After a period of playing the mining camps it would be a relief and benefit she knew. She came to New York and secured an engagement within three days with Mme. Rhea, playing "Maria Louise" to her "Josephine." She appeared for the first time in Boston with this actress at the Boston Theatre. For the summer season she went to Dayton, O., and the following winter found her with Kate Claxton playing "Henrietta." New York then saw her for a season, playing in productions such as "Lady Gladys," at the Madison Square, with Minnie Seligman, then at the Fifth Avenue with Katherine Clemmens in "Mrs. Dascott," which proved a failure. Following this she appeared in "In Old Kentucky," and finished the season in the company with the late Miss Carrie Turner in "The Crust of Society." Washington for the summer found her in the stock company at the National Theatre where she played leading roles. Mr. Charles Frohman then engaged her for his "Men and Women" company in which she appeared at the Columbia Theatre when that house was

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under the Frohman management. She will be remembered as the widow, the light comedy part. With Thomas Keene she played for a season in Shakespearean repertoire with marked success. "The Bachelor's Baby" and "The Great Diamond Robbery" found her in the cast and Boston theatregoers saw her work and appreciated it.

Miss Lawrence came to the Castle Square Theatre May 6, 1896, as leading woman, and in the period of service she has been out of the bill but eight weeks. These being when she required rest, for she has never missed a performance when her name has appeared upon the programme. It can be seen that almost 400 performances have been played, a record that few if any can boast of.

Boston, March 27, '99.

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CHAPTER I.

"MY GOD! THIS MUST NOT BE!"

"Phil is to be married on the 20th of the month, and he wants you to be sure to be on hand. He wonders why you have never sent him word when he went to all the trouble imaginable to secure your address (which is at most times unknown), and then not to hear from you he felt slighted. We sent the cards care of Paris, but then I am not sure that you will receive this, so why need I waste space further. We will forgive your negligence in the past if you will only come."

"If you will only come," read Edwin Leonard as he sat upon the piazza of the Cliff House, San Francisco. His mail had been brought to him by his valet, and it awakened him from a day dream as he gazed at the boundless expanse of ocean stretched before him. The seal-lions were sporting upon Seal rock, roaring with delight as they plunged into the surf.

Edwin Leonard was a man of perhaps forty years of age. His hair with its streaks of gray and his moustache black as jet made his face one that would not be easily forgotten. He had arrived at the Cliff the day previous, and had settled down to a period of enjoyment, such as a man of means can indulge in on the Pacific coast. The letter he had in his hand aroused a new interest in life, and he sat for some time, lost in thought.

"So the youngster is going to be married, is he? Well, let him. It would have been better— He is a lucky fellow. Ah, me!" sighed Leonard as he puffed at his cigar. "It was not for me, that was all."

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Through the smoke of his cigar as it curled away from his lips he fancied he saw a face, fair and smiling. Its blue eyes gazed down into his; the round, full lips parted showing teeth white as snow.

"Amie," he murmured, "if it only could have been.

A tiny face peeped from the case of his watch. "Amie," always "Amie." One would hardly suspect such sentiment from the man smoking in the shade with the letter crumpled in his hand.

* * * * *

Edwin Leonard should have been a gentleman. Indeed there were many who believed him such, and perhaps he was at heart. He, whose name still lingers in the memory of many, was of a family whose ancestors' faces, the men grim and the women beautiful in the quaint, old-fashioned frames, looked down from the walls of the homestead from canvas, the work of artists of reputation. He had many a time while a mere baby stood with his hands in his pockets, and gazed at the faces, faint, but having a fascination for him he could not resist. There was the little oval-shaped miniature in its golden frame with the circle of glass in the back that covered the neatly woven hair—of his great-grandfather, a man whose word was as good as his bond and whose opinion upon questions of importance was sought by his townspeople. He remembered having seen in an oaken chest one day when rummaging about in the attic, as the rain pattered down upon the shingles and the wind howled about the eaves, envelopes, yellow with age, upon which in an old-fashioned hand was traced with regularity, long since discarded, the name Edwin Leonard, Esq.

The bundle was tied neatly with a piece of tape, which in the early days must once have been white, but now yellow. Each envelope bore the same inscription, and, though he would have given his pet rabbit to have known whom they were

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from, there was something so sacred about them that he dared not untie the tape, but placed the packet back in its place, where for ages it had lain.

Edwin Leonard, Esq. The man of his time, and in his boyish heart he felt he had something to be proud of in having such an ancestor. His picture showed a man of kindly countenance, his hair brushed well back from a full forehead, the firm linen choker yellow with age in the portrait. The boy had been told a hundred times by the old people who never tired of coming to the house that he resembled the old gentleman. He "had his eyes and his forehead was a striking resemblance."

"If you are as good and true a man as he," had been said, "you will not have lived in vain."

He did not at the time exactly know what it meant, for he could not see how any one could be otherwise. But time changes everything.

His thoughts wandered back to the time when he was a student at Cambridge. It was in his senior year that he met her. She had come on a visit with the sister of his chum, and it was only natural that he should have made himself attentive. He found it a sweet duty, for Amie Douglas was a beautiful girl then. He wondered how she looked, was she dead or alive. Did she think— No! that was long since forgotten.

Edwin with all his goodness of heart was one of the wildest of the fast set, and Mrs. Douglas was strong in her objections, to having Amie even speak to him.

"My child," she had said when she learned that Amie had been to a ball game with her cousin Agnise, "why do you disobey me? You know that I will not permit you to have anything to do with Edwin Leonard. He is not a fit companion for you, and if what I hear is true he is a very wicked young man. What do you think Harry would say if he knew of your actions?"

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"I don't know as I care much," replied Amie with a pout.

"You must not talk that way," said her mother. "Harry Carleton worships the very ground you walk on. He spoke to your father last night about you."

"Indeed! and what did he say?" asked Amie.

"You know that father and Mr. Carleton have always wished to have their children marry, and so when Harry spoke to him of his love for you, father readily consented. He will speak to you himself tonight. I have invited him to come to dinner."

"And I am to have no voice in the matter, I suppose," said Amie.

"Don't be foolish, child; you know that you like Harry very much indeed. You have known each other since childhood, and before Mr. Leonard appeared you were only too anxious to have him with you."

"I know, mother, but my mind has changed, and I do not care enough for Harry Carleton to marry him."

"You must," said Mrs. Douglas; "your father wishes it, and you know what he would say. My child, you would throw yourself away—but that is out of the question."

Left to himself, Edwin devoted his time to studying just enough to squeak through on, and the remainder of the time was passed in town with his merry set. Frank Johnson, his chum, wondered what the matter was with him, and, while he knew Edwin well enough to know that he would never reveal the true cause of his despondency, still he ventured to inquire one night as he came into the room, "What in the name of all that is bad is the matter with you, Ed? You have acted like a madman lately."

"Is that any of your business?" was the savage reply to the kindly inquiry. "If I make you nervous, why, I will move out, and your delicate nervous system will then assume its normal condition."

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"Quit your chaffing, old man. I know I was impertinent to ask such a question, but I could not help it. You are not a bit like the old Ned, and the other fellows have remarked it also."

"A parcel of old women," cried Edwin. "A fellow has to grind away like mad, attend church three times a day on Sunday, and never glance at a pretty ankle to satisfy them. Look here!" said he, turning upon his friend, his face flushed, "am I not doing my work?"

"Yes, you are, but you are killing yourself doing it. Ed, you will break down before Commencement if you don't pull up."

"And who is to blame, if I do? It won't be you, and so don't you loose any sleep on my account. Shall I turn out the gas?" he continued, glancing at his chum who lay in bed. "I am going to grind awhile."

"Yes, turn it out, Ed," said Frank.

How clear his mind was even upon the smallest detail. Poor Frank, thought the man. Dead now!

In the course of time a note came to his rooms.

"Dear friend," it read.

"You no doubt think it strange that you should not have heard. It was not what I wished. My mother has formed a dislike for you, and has forbidden me to see you again.

"I am engaged to be married to Mr. Harry Carleton (you may know him), so you will see why our meetings—at my home—will be impossible.

"Yours,

"Amie."

* * * * *

They were alone. Their hands met for the first time. The loose flowing gown lay open at the throat, white as the driven snow. Speech was useless. He sat looking at the fair face. The big blue eyes with their softening caught the look that

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flashed from his. She stretched out her tiny hand with its taper fingers and pink, moist palm. He grasped it and felt it tremble. The heaving bosom told plainly of her emotion.

"Yes, you loved me, poor girl. I know you did, and must now, if time has not changed the heart once so passionate. Is mine then as soft as it was? I fear not. Barren and cold from the battle of the world. Do you remember and think dreaming, as I of that happy time rudely awakened by your marriage to him?"

* * * * *

The man's cigar had burned out, and a sudden noise from the romping small boy of the family newly arrived brought him to his feet with a start and shattered his dream of the past.

The crumpled letter on the floor by his feet attracted his attention and he stooped and picked it up.

"Let me see. Where was I? Yes, here it is. 'If you will only come—' I might take the trip and please the youngster and sister Grace, who will feel hurt, I know, if I do not. Let me see," he read.

"You of course do not know whom Phil is to marry. Well, it is a long story. Mamie is quite a young lady now, and at her school she made the acquaintance of a very pretty little girl, and she is as good as she is pretty. Her name is Edwina Carleton—"

"What!" he exclaimed, and he read the letter again to make sure that his eyes had not deceived him.

"Edwina Carleton!—Can it!—No—My God! this must not be!"

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CHAPTER II.

"NO YOU CANNOT HAVE FORGOTTEN!"

"Yes, sir, we can give you a very nice room," said the clerk to the gentleman standing at the desk at the Hoffman House.

"Thanks, I think it will just about suit," said the person addressed, and reaching for a pen he inscribed his name on the hotel register and followed the bell boy to the elevator. He was shown to his room, and throwing aside his top coat sat down in a big arm chair by the window and looked out into the square.

"Back in New York once more. Everything is about the same, the clerk is the same old chap that was here when I left many years ago. He hasn't changed much, except that the hair on his head is a trifle less abundant. Now that I am here what will I do? The world's a bore! It is the same everywhere! What is the use running about to shake yourself up only to come around the globe to the very place you started from, having seen all. What remains to me, but to settle down as gracefully as possible for decay?"

"These are fine ideas that you are expressing," said he in way of reproach; "was it 50 years ago, or was it less than 20 that you had such a rosy view of the world? What were you not going to accomplish. No pinnacle was too high for your exalted ambition, and now what a blank failure. The only pinnacles you ever reached were those of the Alps and Rockies; and as for ambition, what do you know of the meaning of the word? Dead, all dead!"

He went to the side of the room and pressed the button. A boy came in answer to the summons. "Bring me pen, ink and

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paper," said he. "Now that you are here, young man, you can bring me a cocktail also. I rather think sister Grace will be astonished when she learns of my arrival. What is the use of telegraphing that you are coming? It only upsets folks beforehand. I believe in doing it all at once and then the surprise and greeting are all in one and it prevents those long stories of 'how Sadie felt when she learned that you were coming. Do you know that it almost took my breath away. Why I thought you were on the other side of the world, and to think that all the time you were so near,' and the thousand and one remarks that bore one to death. I am an old brute, I suppose, but nevertheless I can't help it."

"Dear sister Grace," he wrote, "you no doubt are surprised to learn that your wandering brother has returned. Don't faint, but try to make room for me at your hospitable board tomorrow at lunch as I shall be at the house at that time.

"Your brother,

"Edwin Leonard."

"There, that's short, and while not very sweet, will let her know that I am in town. Oh, I must put on a P. S. A letter to a woman without a P. S. is an insult.."

"P. S.—I am a trifle seedy, and so shall not trespass upon you. I shall probably go to the opera for a short time and then turn in. Ed."

"Come in," said he, as the boy knocked at the door. "Put it down there. That's it; now, my boy, just ring for a messenger and send him up here to me. You may keep the change." The change rather startled the boy, who bowed himself out.

"Half past six. I'll dress and get a bite to eat, and then, let me see, where will I go? Where did I put that paper? Here it is.

"No, I've seen her! Mansfield is good, but I don't want to

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see him. Ah! here we are; the opera. That strikes me about right. I suppose it is as bad as ever, but it will kill time. Kill time! Here's to old Father Time, and my respects, Brother Knickerbocker!"

* * * * *

The opera was on when he got to the theatre. The audience was of more interest to him than the piece, as he discovered, and between the acts he amused himself looking about to see if he knew a single person present.

"There are none on that side of the house," said he, half aloud, and the young lady beside him sat a trifle closer to her escort, fearing that the man was not quite sober, for the house was packed, and she could not understand what he meant.

There was one person in the house who had seen him when he had entered, and had started so perceptibly that the gentleman beside her said quietly, "Amie, what is the matter? You jump at the slightest noise!"

"I am nervous; that is all, Harry," said she, thankful that the theatre was rather dark, for she could feel the color come and go from her cheeks.

The curtain fell on the second act. The brilliant audience was flitting to and fro, the many theatre parties buzzing like so many bees.

Harry Carleton could not get a word from his wife, and after many vain attempts at conversation, subsided, thinking that she had one of her silent moods and it would be best to let her alone.

The gentleman who had caused all this commotion was blissfully ignorant of the fact and kept on with his amusement of surveying the house. When the curtain fell he arose and came up the aisle toward where Amie sat.

"Yes, it is he," she said, and her heart beat wildly against the delicate silken corsage. She hid her face in her fan on the pretense of a yawn as he passed, and was safe.

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"What if he should have recognized me? What a scene he would have made. I wonder when he returned? He looks old. Why shouldn't he? The life he has been leading is not one that preserves the youth of a man."

Leonard was looking about anxiously, she thought; then, as though a sudden flash of lightning had illumined the scene, she realized why he must be there. "He must be searching for me! He dare not call, and wishes to see me. He shall!"

"Harry, dear," said she, as soon as she could regain her composure, "are you particular about remaining any longer? I am tired, and the opera is very dull. Let us go!"

"I have only waited for you to say the word. That has been my opinion long ago. If this piece lives, then my judgment is not worth much."

"It is miserable," said she, and nodding to some friends, she passed out of the theatre. The ride home was a silent one. The man tired, bored and nervous; the woman wide-awake, anxious, and eager for the morrow.

* * * * *

"A letter for you, sir," said the clerk, handing a small envelope to Leonard as he passed the office on his way to the cafe, the following morning.

"Thanks," said he, as he glanced at the inscription.

"How did you rest? Good, I hope."

"Very well, indeed. This was the only one?"

"Yes."

He passed into the cafe and seated himself beside the window. He glanced at the address. "'Mr. Edwin Leonard.'—That looks familiar! It isn't Grace's writing. I wonder whose it can be." He tore open the envelope and read:

"'My Dear Edwin:—

"'You will not be offended if I call you such? for there was a time when you were very dear to me. How many years

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is it since we have met? Think of it! You could not have loved me to have stayed away so long. I saw you last night, at the opera. You passed me by near enough for me to have touched your coat had I put out my hand, and you did not know me. Have I changed so much, or have you forgotten that there ever was such a person as Amie Douglas?

" 'No, you cannot have forgotten! There are things that even a man cannot forget! I want to see you. I must see you! I will meet you at 2 o'clock at the Warldorf. I have much to say. Yours, Amie.' "

The man folded the note into the remnants of the envelope, and placed it back in his pocket. He sat playing with his knife, staring out of the window.

"Amie Douglas! I must go. It is better so!"

After his breakfast he strolled up the street. He had some friends to look up and he dropped in at the club, only to find a group of young bloods, who took their canes from their mouths when he entered, and then replaced them, looking foolish at having given expression to any emotion, and continued to stare out at the pavement.

A few friends of his were there, and he passed a rather jolly forenoon, after which he ordered a cab and was driven to his sister's.

Grace Atwood was a jolly little woman, and her husband was her match in every particular. He had heard the news of the return of his brother-in-law, and had taken a trip up town that he might meet him when he came to lunch.

"Here's uncle," cried Phil Atwood, a strapping young fellow. "Here he is, mother! Mamie! come quick." The reception was a warm one, and the man experienced a choking sensation as he saw how happy his sister was in her home, surrounded by her bright family.

"Ed, you have got back at last," said Grace. "We had

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almost given up all hope of seeing you again. Your letters were not very frequent visitors here."

"To tell the truth," said Edwin, "I have lived a life that is beyond description. One day here and the next anywhere that fancy might lead me. It is natural that I should not like to write. I knew, or rather felt, that you were well, and when I did hear from you I was reassured. It never occurred to me that you cared to know."

"Why uncle," said Bert, "how can you say such things; of course we all cared. How long are you going to stay?"

"That depends," said he, looking into the fire.

"You are welcome, you know," remarked Mr. Atwood, coming over and placing his hand on his shoulder. "Come, send your traps around to the house and make your home with us."

"Do, won't you, Ed?" said his sister.

"You are all very kind; more so than I deserve, and if nothing happens to prevent, I think that I shall remain in New York for a time, at least."

"If nothing happens!" said his sister. "You are not married, are you?"

"No," said Edwin. "I never found another!"

"Another!" cried Mamie. "Then you were in love once?"

"Yes, very long ago!"

"Tell me about it, won't you uncle?"

"There, there, Mamie; you must not bother uncle. He has only just come, and you will have plenty of time to listen to his stories. He is quite a story teller,—that is, unless he has lost that faculty since I saw him last!"

"I will tell you, Mamie, sometime; but I want to hear about you. What are you doing? Studying, I suppose?"

"Yes; I am only home on a visit. Wasn't it fortunate that I was here when you came?"

"Yes; and Phil, I see he is quite a man."

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"Junior partner, sir!" said Phil, proudly. "I'm quite the real thing!"

"What!" exclaimed his mother. "Phil, I do wish you would not use such language. It is simply heathenish the way you young men talk. It sounds like a Hottentot's gibberish!"

"Can't help it, mother; slang is too expressive to be neglected. Don't you think so, uncle?"

"Some slang is decidedly more expressive of one's feelings than good straight English!" remarked Leonard.

"There, mother, uncle agrees with me!"

"You boys will please stop expounding the virtues of slang and come to lunch."

The party about the family board was a merry one, and Edwin entertained them with stories of his travels.

"I shall have to leave you this afternoon, as I have an appointment that may keep me until late."

"What! are you so busy after your arrival?"

"I always find something to occupy my mind," said he. "I will try to be home to dinner, but if I am not, you must not think it funny, for I shall be here so much very soon that you will be thankful for a rest!"

As he walked down the street his mind was active in the thought of meeting Amie once more. He hurried along until he came to a cab that was standing at the corner of the street. The clock stood at half past the hour when he reached the Warldorf. He went immediately to the parlor. There was but a single person in the room, a woman, whose back was turned toward him.

"It must be she! Pardon me," said he, going toward the woman, who turned upon him an inquiring gaze.

"I beg a thousand pardons!" exclaimed the man, "I was looking for a friend."

It was not Amie. Nor did she come, though he waited long into the dusk of the evening.

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CHAPTER III.

"I LIVED A LIE."

"It makes me feel old," Amie was saying, as she sat opposite Grace. Between them was a table, upon which the steam was puffing from the nose of a tiny brass tea-kettle. "It does make one feel old to have a daughter about to be married!"

It was long past the holidays. The young girls were out calling and the mothers were talking of the approaching wedding.

"It is best for them to marry," said Grace. "Phil is a good fellow, far different from the average young man. To be sure, when he was in college he was a trifle wild; but that is nothing more than what you expect from a live boy. Then again, it is far better for him than to have him follow in the footsteps of his uncle."

"His uncle?" asked Amie. "I did not know that he had an uncle. Surely he does not live in the city, or I should have met him before this."

"He is here in New York,—only arrived this morning or last night. He is a peculiar fellow, if he is my brother. I cannot understand him. When he was a young man, like Phil, he was so different. Full of fun and as ambitious as anyone. Today he rarely smiles, and as for ambition, he has none. He has spent his life wandering about the world."

"What a restless fellow he must be," said Amie.

"It is not exactly that. I can't tell what it is. He has a

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hatred for this place; that is all I can think of that keeps him away."

"How old a man is he?"

"Let me see; Edwin must be 40!"

"Isn't it strange that he should live the way he does. I don't know as I ever heard of such a case before!"

"That is what Mr. Atwood says; but, as well as I should know him, he has never given me the slightest hint as to what has caused him to become a wanderer."

"Some love affair, perhaps!" suggested Amie.

"That is what I suspect," said Grace. "Ed Leonard was a fine looking fellow when he was in college, and could have had his pick among the young ladies in society. He was rich, handsome and talented."

"Ed Leonard!" murmured Amie to herself. "It must be—yes, it is his sister, and to think—"

"I don't see," said she aloud. "There must be some reason. No man would act that way, if it were not for some cause."

"That is what I told Mr. Atwood; but he simply said, 'What of it?' I, for my part, would like to know!"

"I can see how it makes you feel; it would me," said Amie. And then, to reassure herself that Grace knew nothing of the matter, she asked: "Have you hinted that you would like to know?"

"A hundred times; but Edwin is very close mouthed. The only thing he ever said was that some day he might be able to settle down in New York and live like a Christian. But until that time comes, I have little hope of ever knowing what wrecked his life."

"Good," said Amie to herself. "I am safe. Edwin has been silent. I might have known that he would. But there is no telling how much or how little a man will tell his sister."

"I had mailed him a long letter," said Grace, "and I told him

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of Phil's approaching marriage, asking him to be sure to come. He was good for once, for he is here."

Amie's carriage had been walked back and forth by the coachman, who was fretting as any good coachman does at having to drive about in the biting cold air of the January afternoon.

Amie left soon, and when she tucked the robe about her she gave a sigh of relief. "Am I always to be haunted by my fault? Can I never turn but to be confronted with the grim spectre?"

Happy in the thought that Edwina was to marry the man she loved, and pleased that he was such an excellent fellow, there was nothing left her to wish for. Then the apparition of her former self rose before her. Grace did not know, she had never spoken of the past, but then there was the suspicion that might at any moment be realized.

What was she to do? Was she to sit idly by and let the natural course of events weave the web about the young lives happy in the ignorance of the true condition? Should she tell all, and by so doing ruin the life of the young girl pure as a lily and innocent as a babe?

The thought was a terrible one to her, and she knit her pretty brows in her endeavor to unravel the tangled skein in which she felt she had been drawn. Edwin knew, but would he listen to reason. He might make a clean breast of the matter, even though it ruin Edwina. What would he do? She had reached her home, and going to her apartments she locked herself in.

She had been in her room an hour when Mr. Carleton knocked and was admitted. "Ain't you home rather early?" she asked as he sat beside her.

"No, not very," he replied, "I wanted to see you!"

"You must have something important or you would not bother yourself," said she bitterly.

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"You have an excellent memory, Amie, so I need not sharpen it for you by any further remarks. You can remember the time when I was a constant visitor in Boston. How I pleaded for your hand and how cold you were to me? That was many years ago. Then as though the glass had been shaken, you flung yourself at my head and like a lamb I accepted."

"What an old skeleton monger you are," said Amie. "Your memory is in its normal state I see."

"What," continued Harry, "what was the cause of that surrender? Can you tell me? Strange wasn't it?"

"How bitterly you speak!"

"It is no wonder that I am bitter. When I look back and see how I was made a fool of. I was a weak fellow then. A man infatuated with your charms that were made more tempting from the fact that you held me off and whetted the desire that was already strong. I fell into the trap as innocently as a child."

"Trap? What do you mean?" said Amie, her face clouded by a dark look.

"Trap was what I said and what I meant."

"Explain yourself."

"I will. Your mother, knowing of my love for you, took advantage of it to shield you from the disgrace that would have fallen on your name had it not been for me."

"How kind of you, I'm sure."

"Edwina is to be married. All well and good. It is not for me to object or prevent."

"What do you mean?"

"That for many years I have acted the blind man."

"Your eyesight it seems has returned!"

"You were young and beautiful, and it was little wonder that Leonard should have loved you. I do not blame him. I pity him. Edwina is a young lady now, and I would be the last

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to injure her, for she regards me with affection. Oh Amie, how could you have been so false to have lived the lie you have!"

"I lived a lie," said Amie. "I have lived a life that few would not have had they been placed in the same position. I will tell you plainly, Harry, that from the first day I realized the mistake I had made, I ceased to regard you as a husband. I was frightened into doing what I did. I was young, too young to know what life meant. I do not blame my mother, for she is dead, poor soul, she did what she thought was for the best. Had I known one-half what I do now, I never would have been your wife! I would rather have starved in the streets than to have brought about this state of affairs! I did not love you and you must have known it. Did I not refuse you many times and still, when the time came, you were blind to only one thought!

"A weak girl in the hands of her mother could do nothing to save herself. I did love Edwin Leonard. I love him now more than any living soul. He was not the scoundrel you would paint him. His love was true. I saw him even after I had promised to be your wife, and his mind had not changed. He had no desire to rid himself of me. He was ready to face the world for me and fight bravely. And now you talk of being led into a trap. It strikes me that if any one was trapped, it was me!"

"If he loved you so much why is he away?"

"He is here, in this city, now, this moment!"

"My God, what has brought him?"

"There is one danger still, as you see," said Amie. "It is that Leonard may spoil all by his impulsiveness. He is a strange composition and may do what you least expect."

"He is better able to judge for himself as to that matter," said Harry.

"Leave everything to me," said Amie, "and if I don't ar-

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range matters so that there will be no scandal, then I am not the woman I think I am."

"Poor girl. I hope it will come out all right, for it would kill her to know," said Harry.

"Life, my dear Harry, is a tragedy," said Amie. "You have the light touches of the comedian, the pathos is not lacking, but the horror predominates. Have you ever noticed as you walk up town of an afternoon the faces of the men and women that you pass. If you have not, make a study of them in the future, and you will find upon the faces of the many the hunted look about the eyes, the dejected appearance of the whole person, walking swiftly as though with the firm intention of reaching the destination as soon as possible, or others walking in a listless manner as though they had no place to go, and were moving along simply to kill time. The expression is the same! Once in a while you will find a natty fellow, clad in the height of fashion, swinging his cane and puffing his cigar, content with himself and the whole world, but the vast majority are haunted by the world.

"You are sensible enough to realize that at this late day there is little sense to mix ourselves up in a turmoil at which society would only smile and the newspapers make capital of. There is such a thing as ruining a young life beyond repair, and if you by any means do so, you are more guilty than I have been."

"Ruin, and pray what has my life been but a ruin, Amie?" exclaimed the man. "You have made me what I am, a dismal fellow that feels that the world's criticism may fall at any moment upon his head."

"That rests entirely with you," said Amie

"People go to Rome to see the Colliseum. A grand ruin. They risk fever, plague and many die in their search. There are human ruins! Every day companions in the city in which they live. None care for them!"

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"To become a ruin, one must once have been a grand structure!"

"Not necessarily," said Harry. "There are some that do the best they can, and that is not much."

"Yourself, for instance."

"These men are regarded as good fellows, and you hear them spoken of as 'He's doing the best he can.'

"The ruin I speak of must first have been successful, then the reverse, and he walks about the streets of his native city, a wreck, a human ruin. No one cares for such a man, he is a cipher in the community. Blasted hopes. Struggling against the tide, never able to raise his head above the water. Care-worn is the face and pinched. His hair white, hand trembling, but still within him is the old time fire that was once so strong."

"Ah, but you see," said Amie, "your ruin committed the gravest sin of all. He lost his money."

"Not exactly that. I do not mean the man whose financial wreckage has caused his downfall, but the man whose intellect has been undermined. A sensitive, tender hearted man, trusting and true, whose heart has been trampled upon by the dainty heel of a woman's shoe. Quietly breathing each day the breath of life, and living not in the future, but the past. A man of other times!"

"It is a pretty picture you are painting, Harry. You make me ill. What has got into you?"

"Always in the past, when hope was young and treachery lay hidden. So slowly down the stream of life he drifts. The sands drop; each day the pile beneath is larger than the one above, until there comes a day when there is no more. 'Dust to dust,' and he has gone to mother earth.

"Do you realize what I am saying? Can't you see why I have drawn the picture for your eyes? It was to show you what your life has been. It has broken mine, and stands in the

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way of the happiness of Edwina. Try to save the girl from the danger and I will forgive all!"

"It shall be as you wish it, Harry. Mrs. Atwood has spoken of Edwin Leonard. Do not fear! When I meet him it will be to remedy the evil that exists. To exhort from him a promise which he will keep."

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CHAPTER IV.

"SHE IS MY CHILD—MY OWN CHILD."

"I do so wish that Uncle Edwin would come," exclaimed Mamie Atwood, as she jumped down from the window seat and walked over to her friend who sat by the table, glancing through the latest illustrated paper.

"Uncle Edwin," said Edwina, "who is he?"

"Don't you know? Why he is mother's brother, and the dearest old uncle in the world."

"Is he old?" asked Edwina.

"No; not very, but he has had a hard time, so I heard mama say, and was not very happy in a love affair many, many years ago."

"Is he coming home to the wedding?"

"Oh, what a blush," Mamie exclaimed, as she kissed Edwina. "Yes! He is home for the wedding, and I want you to love him very much, for we mean to keep him with us if we can. Mama wanted him to do so the last time he was here, but he ran away without a word."

"The door closed just then," said Mamie; "go and see who it was. I suspect it may be Phil. Go, I know you want to."

"Don't be silly, Mamie," said Edwina; "any one would think that you were to be married instead of me the way you act."

"Girls!" came from the doorway, and presently Phil entered the room.

"Sorry to have disturbed your chat, Mamie, but as Edwina is mine you will please not monopolize her."

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He gave Edwina a dainty bunch of violets. "What do you think I have got for you, Mamie? You look as though you thought I had forgotten you."

"I don't know, Phil. You are continually feeding me on candy. I suppose you have brought some more to seal the lips of your troublesome sister."

"No; better than candy," said Phil, with his hands behind him.

"Don't tease, that's a good fellow. Let me see what you have got. Edwina, you hold his hands, while I take it away from him."

"Time!" said Phil, as he was surrounded by the two girls. "I have enough. Here, what do you think that is?" said he, holding aloft a telegram.

"Not from uncle," said Mamie, clapping her hands.

"Yes; from uncle, and he will be here tonight."

"I'm so glad! Does mama know?"

"No; I have not seen her. You go find her and tell her the news."

Mamie found her mother in the sewing room, busy preparing for the wedding. She burst into the room, exclaiming, "He's coming, mama, he's coming."

"Who is coming? Mamie, I do wish you would be more dignified; you act like a school girl."

"So would you if you knew."

"What?"

"That Uncle Edwin is home and will be here tonight."

"Bless me! Is that so! How did you learn?"

"Phil got a telegram today!"

"Does Edwina know?" asked her mother.

"Yes; I told her that he was coming. She had never heard of him. I thought we had spoken of him, didn't you?"

"We have all been so busy that I hardly know what I have

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said or done," said Mrs. Atwood. "We must make preparations for him. Mamie, tell John to see that his chamber is put in order."

"Papa will be pleased when he hears."

"Yes; indeed."

"Is Mrs. Carleton coming this evening?"

"Yes; she will call. Edwina is to stay to dinner, is she not?"

"You can't drive her away," laughed Mamie.

The triumphant entrance of a hero could not have been hailed with more delight than was the coming of Edwin Leonard. It was late in the afternoon when he arrived, and without delay he made himself at home.

"I am glad that you concluded to come to the house rather than go to a hotel," said Grace. "The last time you were here it was impossible to keep you; now I shall lock up your shoes at the first symptom of uneasiness."

"Don't be alarmed," said he. "You may be glad to get rid of me. Who knows?"

"I will risk that. If you want to go to your room, I'll excuse you, only don't be gone long, for I want you to meet her soon."

"I will be down soon," said he, without referring to her whom he felt it was——

As he entered the room, he saw a slender figure bending over the piano apparently deep in meditation. Before her was a pile of music. It was not Mamie, that he was sure of. The face was turned away from him so he could not distinguish the features. He was undecided what to do, whether to enter and make himself known, or to retreat and wait for an opportunity when he would be presented. While he was trying to decide what course to pursue, the young girl turned toward him.

"It is Edwina," said he to himself.

The young girl looked half inquiringly about the room.

Edwin stepped forward, saying, "Miss Carleton, I believe."

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"Yes; and you must be Uncle Edwin," said she, "that I have heard so much about."

"I trust that what you have heard has been kind," said he, seating himself by the fireside.

She stood leaning against the edge of the piano, looking him full in the face, her gaze one of kindly interest.

"Mamie said she did hope that you would be home in time."

"For the wedding. Yes," said the man. "I did hurry home and expressly for that purpose."

Edwina turned away and sat down at the piano, running her fingers over the keys. The man watched from the place where he sat. He saw a profile that carried him back many years. The likeness was strong. Was he then so old? How could he have staid away so long? He went where she sat and stood watching her as she played.

"You remind me of some one that was very dear to me," he said.

Edwina looked up and blushed, saying, "One you loved?"

"Yes; a woman like you, fair, with a sunny smile and eyes that danced as yours did then as you spoke of love."

"Is she dead?" asked Edwina, soberly.

"Dead," said the man, "as far as our love is concerned. Dead to me as much so as though the sod were resting upon her coffin lid."

"You are unhappy," said Edwina. "What makes you? I am sorry that I recall a past that has such sadness for you."

"It was not you, my dear young lady. It was the reflection I saw upon your face that recalled the time. I should not have spoken, I should not have dug up the old memories, that for years I had thought dead."

"And I was the cause. Do let me do something to change the thoughts."

"You can do nothing, Miss Carleton. I am a morose old

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'bach,' whose heart was turned to stone many years ago. If there is once in awhile a time when the old sentiment becomes stronger than the other, it is only for a time; it soon passes away, leaving me colder and more hard than before."

"You speak bitterly," said Edwina.

"And I have reason to do so," said he. "To you who are young and just drinking of the cup of happiness, it seems strange to listen to a man whose whole being, idea and disposition is in opposition to yours, but you must know that to all in their lives there comes a day when the past is thrown before them at a flash, like the reflection of a picture upon the canvas."

"I think that with all your harshness toward the past, you bear no malice toward the woman."

"God forbid! I have but the best wishes for her, and I have always worked for that end."

"Yours must be a lonely life."

"A sad one it surely is," said the man, "and yet I have no cause to complain. So you are to be married tomorrow, and you are happy?"

"Very," said Edwina.

"If you were to lose Phil?"

"I never could lose him!"

"No, I suppose not, but if it were possible?"

"But it is not possible. How strange you talk! One would think that there was something horrible to be revealed."

Edwin said nothing, but bowed his head upon his hands.

"Does your head pain you?" asked Edwina.

"Yes, a little," he replied, "and my heart also," said he to himself. "I cannot speak of it, I would be a villain to tell her, and still why should I not? She is my child, my own child. The child that would have blessed me, but who now talks to me as an utter stranger, knowing nothing and caring but for the moment whether I am pained or not. She is mine, mine and

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Amie's. She has no right to call him father. Would she love me if I told her? No, she would hate me for my action. Why should I ruin her young life, and again why should I permit it? The world is wide, and many are the secrets that are hidden in other lands. What right have they to claim her? Fool that I was to give her up.

"They have no claim on her more than I. Why should I, whose every intention was of the best, wander about the earth, unbefriended and without the one thing I most crave, the love of her, who is my own.

"It cannot be. Phil shall not marry her, he shall not take her from me. He has no claim half so strong as mine. He loves her. What is his love to mine? What is his life to mine?

"His life—— Stop! Would I wreck it as mine was wrecked? Ah, God above, take pity on me and help me to peace of mind, if nothing more, for I shall go mad beneath the strain. Amie will listen to me and help me. What should I care if she will only stand by me; all else can go to the seven winds, I will be gratified."

"Mr. Leonard," said Edwina, "you must be ill. Let me call Mrs. Atwood; your face is pale and your eyes look wildly at me. You will be unable to be at my wedding if you don't take care."

"Yes, I will," said Edwin. "I will be there, never fear, I will be there!"

"Don't you be so sure," came from behind a curtain so suddenly that Edwin sprang to his feet. "If you don't behave better," said Phil, "I shall forbid it."

"Phil, you bad boy, is that the way in which to greet your uncle?"

"Old uncles when they are bachelors and rich have to be watched," said he. "Here I find you talking to my sweetheart, and knowing your power of attraction for the fair sex it was little wonder that I feared that I might lose her."

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"Phil," exclaimed Edwina.

"You should not leave the young lady for an instant if you do not want to find me at her side."

"Didn't I tell you uncle would like you? I don't see how any one can help it."

"A truce," cried Mamie, "you are all having too much attention paid you. I am jealous, uncle; you must devote some of your time and praise to me, or else I shall be offended."

"What can I say that will please you, Mamie? Shall I tell you that you are a beautiful young lady, that the man who is fortunate enough to win you will get a treasure. I believe that is the kind of talk that young ladies like to hear from old uncles."

"Stop, you know you do not mean a word you say."

Edwin watched Phil and Edwina as they walked into the reception room where the light from the lamp cast a mellow glow about. He was thinking of the past and of what was to mark the future. He tried to school himself to believe that what he was to do was right, but Edwina's pretty face, bright with a happy smile as she talked with Phil, would dispel all such thoughts.

"Uncle, are you going to sleep?" said Mamie, striking him with her fan. "You sit there staring at them. Won't you wake up and tell me of your travels, your love affairs and your adventures? You must have had many."

"My travels would not interest you, and my adventures are, I am sorry to say, too commonplace to be related."

"You do not include your love affairs."

"No; one must leave them out."

"Those are what I would most like to hear. Don't you remember a long time ago you told me you would tell me of your love?"

"Yes, I remember."

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"Then why not now?" said Mamie.

"Shall I tell you a story?" said Edwin.

"Yes; do, and make it end——"

"You shall decide how it shall end."

"Once upon a time, as they always say in the fairy tales, I had a friend who, when very young, lost his parents. He, however, was blessed with a bank account of no meagre proportions, and under the guardianship of a goodly man entered college the same year that I did.

"There was something about him that drew me toward him, and from that day we were the closest of friends.

"We struggled through the four years, helping each other in every possible way. So we passed the years, the happiest we ever saw, it so turned out. When we left college I went —— but we are speaking of my friend."

"Is this the friend you have been with?" asked Mamie.

"You must not interrupt.

"During my friend's college life he had become acquainted with a young lady of excellent family, beautiful as one could wish for. His rooms were decorated with her pictures and dainty little trophies of their meetings, which were often. As his college career drew to a close, he told me that he hoped to be married and asked me if I would be best man. I readily consented. He was pleased that I should like his choice. Class day and commencement came and he had her with him. Then came the breaking up of the college life.

"I did not receive any word from him, and thought it strange, for he was to be married soon after graduation. Hearing nothing and tiring of the city, I soon after went abroad. It was years before I heard from him. He was ill in a hospital, and begged me to come to him. I went.

"When I entered the ward I looked about me for my friend. There were only two patients in the ward, and I failed to recog-

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nize either. A nurse came presently, and led me to his bedside. He was sleeping at the time, and I went to another part of the room to wait until he awoke. I did not have to wait long; his sleep was troubled.

"I went to his side. The poor fellow was overjoyed to see me, and as I sat holding his hand he told me of his life.

" 'You remember her, old chap,' said he.

" 'Yes, to be sure I do,' I answered. 'What of her?'

" 'You know how much I cared for her. Let me see, it was eighteen years ago. What an excellent memory one has for such things. I want some one to talk to; I must tell some one the story I have kept to myself all these years.

" 'When I left you I went to call upon her, and spent the whole day in her company. Her mother was in ignorance of our engagement, and did not know.

" 'I told her of my love for her daughter, but she would not listen. I dropped out of her life as suddenly as I had entered it.

" 'Years rolled by, until one day I was crossing a street, when I looked up, and there sat my love and beside her a beautiful girl.

" 'I could not speak, the apparition was so sudden. All of the hotels failed to give me her address, and from that day to this I have never seen her.'

" 'What would you have me do?' I asked, as I saw he had finished his story.

" 'I want you to find her for me,' said he, as he reached for a well worn piece of newspaper that lay on the table beside him. An item upon it was marked. It was the announcement of an engagement."

"What did he want you to do?" asked Mamie, leaning across the table.

Edwin was about to answer when Grace entered the room.

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"Oh, there you are, Ed. I have been trying to find you this long time. Let me introduce you to Mrs. Carleton, Mr. Leonard, my brother. A sad fellow you will find him."

Edwin did not reply for a moment, he stood with his head slightly bowed, and tried to collect his thoughts before he raised his eyes to the woman before him.

"I am delighted to meet you," he heard her say, and saw a hand white, sparkling with gems extended before him. He took it gently, saying, "I have heard of you much of late."

Amie smiled and sat beside Mamie.

"Uncle Edwin was telling a story when you came in," said she. "I was very much interested. You will continue, won't you, uncle? I know Mrs. Carleton would like to hear it."

"You must excuse me, Mamie; I am a bashful man, and it would embarrass me to tell it to such a large audience," said he, looking intently at Amie as he spoke.

"You are back in the city to remain?" she asked.

"Yes; I came on an important matter," said he.

"Why, I thought you came to attend the wedding?" said Mamie.

"So I did, but——"

"Dinner is served," said John, and while Mamie waited for her answer Edwin offered his arm to Amie and they passed into the dining room.

"Uncle is a queer man," said Mamie; "I wonder why he would not finish that story. I mean to make him do so after dinner, though."

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CHAPTER V.

"NO ONE KNOWS OR EVER WILL KNOW UNLESS YOU——

The dinner was a trying one for both Amie and Edwin. Seated by each other's side they played their parts well, and no one present would have suspected that they had ever met before.

Mamie's inquisitive gaze at them was the one thing that annoyed Amie, who was a trifle suspicious. The story that she had interrupted worried her also, and she wondered what Edwin could have been saying.

She saw him watching Edwina and Phil, and now and then she saw a look that she dreaded. She kept him busy answering questions, and tried to draw him out, but he was wary, and with all her knowledge of him she had no effect whatever. He showed a polite interest upon his part, and even went so far as to be entertaining, but it was in such a manner that she could not convince herself that he meant to keep quiet. She dreaded to think that he was there for a purpose, the one she most feared. She determined to watch him closely.

It was a weary time for her. She afterward in explanation to her husband said, "I felt as though I were sitting upon a keg of powder, the fuse of which had been ignited, and it sputtered nearer and nearer the magazine, until just as I thought it was about to explode, dinner was over and we left the table."

The ladies left the room, and after they had gone Mr. Atwood and Edwin over their cigars and wine talked of the future that was before Phli.

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"I am to give up business in a year or two," said Mr. Atwood, "and I feel that when that time comes Phil will be able to take charge. There is nothing like marriage to sharpen a young man's wits. Take my example. Before I married your sister you know what I was. I never had a definite purpose until then, and now when I look back on my life, I find very few things that I care to change.

"To be sure there were many things that were unpleasant, but I afterward found that they were for the best."

"Then you believe that all things that are to be will be?" said Edwin.

"Most assuredly I do," said Mr. Atwood; "you can talk about your luck as much as you please. It may appear to be luck at first, but deeper down you will find that there is a cause for everything, and that its effect is for the good in the end."

"Do you believe in chance?" asked Edwin.

"Yes; I think that chance comes to every one in a lifetime. It may come more, but chance is nothing but another name for fortune. It is fickle. If you grasp it firmly when it comes, either from knowledge or through mistake, you are accredited with being far-sighted and shrewd, when in reality you are nothing more or less than fortunate. If you let an opportunity pass, you will find that it rarely comes again, and you will look back into the past only to regret."

"You say that you have nothing to regret."

"Neither have I," said Mr. Atwood. "I was not speaking of myself, but referring to you my boy."

"Oh, indeed," said Edwin.

"I have always thought that there must have been something in your life that turned you adrift—something that you may not care to speak of. You I know regret it. You show it by your looks."

"Am I then such a foolish fellow as to go about, my face reflecting the feelings within?"

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"No; I don't mean that. Your life speaks for itself. Grace has asked you many times to remain with us, and now I want you to promise me that you will."

"I cannot. Not now. I will let you know tomorrow."

"Tomorrow is the day of the wedding."

"I know. I will decide then," said he as he tossed his cigar into the tray.

"Come, Edwin, fill up your glass and drink to the health of the young people."

"Their health and happiness."

"Mrs. Carleton is a strangely handsome woman," remarked Mr. Atwood, as he put his glass upon the table.

"She is indeed."

"Edwina is a sweet girl, Ed, and loves Phil dearly. She looks a little like her mother, don't you think so?"

Edwin did not answer; he was thinking—thinking of what he intended to do, of the result of his action, and what the man before him would say. His heart was sick within him, and he dreaded the time.

Mr. Atwood looked at him, and wondered at the variety of expressions that flitted across his face.

"You are worried," he said.

"I—worried!" exclaimed Edwin. "What have I got to worry me?"

"I don't know; I didn't say you had anything."

"I never was more free in all my life."

"Good! I didn't know but that you had something that you wanted to say to me. Come and knock the billiard balls about for a while; it will do you good."

"Thanks, I think I will," said Edwin, as he followed Mr. Atwood out to the billiard room.

Amie had waited patiently for a chance to talk with Edwin, and was fearful that she would not see him. She knew him to be

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a man that when his mind was once made up, nothing could change it.

"The only chance I have got," she said, "is the fact that he has not quite decided what to do. Oh! dear, why don't he stop playing billiards; one would think he had nothing on his mind."

The young people were in the music room, enjoying themselves. Edwina was playing for Phil, as he sang a love song, Mamie was curled up in a big arm chair, watching them. Grace had excused herself, saying she had a violent headache, and needed rest before the excitement of the morrow.

Amie was restless, and had about given up in despair, when Edwin entered the room. He was alone. Mr. Atwood had sent him to entertain her, he said. Amie watched him, and could but admire the air he assumed when she knew how he must feel.

They had chatted upon the topics that had an interest for them, and there came a pause. Amie was the first to resume.

"You came back for what reason?"

"You know," said he.

"You did not know that Phil was to marry your—Edwina until a few days ago?"

"I never dreamed of such a thing."

"And what of it if he is? Do you see any reason why he should not?"

"Do you then overlook it?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"It is different with you."

"I don't see how."

"You have but your daughter's interest to look out for. Do you in the face of the conditions desire that it should take place?"

"No one knows or ever will know unless you——"

"That is just it," said he. "If I'll stand by and see it done. Would it be natural for me, the father, to permit Phil to marry?"

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"She is as pure a girl as ever lived. Why should you care? I was afraid you would talk. That is why I came to reason with you."

"I feel that I must, that it would not be right to deceive Grace and all that are dear to me."

"Think, Edwin, they love each other dearly. They love as you and I once did. Think of your desolate condition, your life that has been a wreck. Would you care to make it harder for me and to ruin their lives simply for a whim?"

"Whim!" said he.

"It is purely that. Who is there that knows or cares?"

"Do you think that Grace would like to know that Phil married the child of her brother, and that he stood by and looked on. Would that be true to her, true to him?"

"He has no right to know, neither has she. They know nothing of your past life, and they have no right to know mine. Phil met Edwina as he would meet any other girl. He fell in love with her, and is to make her his wife. Edwina is the child of our secret marriage."

"But the guilt rests upon my shoulders."

"If no one ever came between us, Edwin, we would have been happy. Would our love have been less pure than theirs. Think what you are doing; you are seeking to keep apart two people that love each other, whose whole lives are wrapped in each other."

"Love! Yes, they may think they love, so far as they are capable."

"Then why tear them apart?"

"There is no such thing as love," cried he. "I once believed you loved me. I thought it as much as Phil believes Edwina loves him. If I were to go to him and tell him, he would turn upon his heel and leave me, but in after years when he looked back he would see that I was right, and would thank me for it."

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"A man's love dates not from his first attack. That is a mere passing fancy. His love, the true born love, that which lasts, is the one tempered by the heat of life's battles until its edge is keen as a razor blade.

"Would you waken them? Would you blast Phil's hope and turn him into the man you are; the cold, cynical man whose hope of the future is very small? Would you turn the eyes of the world upon Edwina and yourself? It would be known, and every fireside would ring with the story."

"There was a time when I dreaded an exposure, but now it is the fashion."

"I know that you care," said Amie.

"I have nothing to live for, no one to care except these people who——"

"And by an act of folly you are to make them miserable. It will not help matters. It will break their hearts, and leave you to enjoy the work of misery you have caused. You have not the slightest feeling for the child; if you had you would let them tear you limb from limb before you would divulge the secret that you have kept so long."

"And we are the only ones to know."

"No; there is another who has known for years what you had thought buried in our breasts. My husband. Through his love for Edwina he would rather die than speak. You know the life I have led, the dread and horror I experienced lest a discovery be made; and to think that he should know and be silent, it was more than I could believe. Edwin, you said you loved me once. If you can remember that happy time, look back and by the memory swear that you will keep silent."

Edwin looked at the woman. She was still beautiful. If he remained silent, all would be well. If he spoke what would follow? He hated to think. He half feared a tragedy. The melody of the song came in from the music room.

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"What would you do, love, when home returning
With hopes high burning, with wealth for you?"

"What would you do?" asked Amie. "What will you do?"

She glanced with a look of inquiry, then turned her face away.

Edwin was by her side, his hand met hers, warm and moist, his cold, but firm. "I have won him over," thought she.

"Mrs. Carleton!" called Mamie.

Edwin straightened up, and walked over to the mantel and leaned upon it.

"What is it?" said Amie.

Mamie came and sat beside her. "You don't mind losing Edwina, do you?"

"Losing her! why no," laughed Amie.

"Mama said she should not like to lose me, although some day she said she supposed she would have to."

Edwin came over where they sat, and stroked Mamie's hair, saying, "Don't you worry."

The young girl threw her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"I think I will go to the library. You will excuse me," he said.

Amie watched him leave the room, and putting her arm about Mamie they went into the music room.

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CHAPTER VI.

"ARE YOU HAPPY? HAVE YOU BEEN HAPPY?" AGAIN CAME THE VOICE.

"Bah. What is the use of my sitting here and poring over this mass of transient trash," exclaimed Edwin, as he threw a bundle of papers upon the table beside him, and glanced up at his companion who sat on the other side in the library of the club.

"Bring me a copy of the Scriptures. I want to read the story of Esther. There is nothing new under the sun," exclaimed Edwin, with a defiant expression, as though ready at an instant's notice to pick up the hatchet that was supposed to be buried upon such occasions. "You read of a railroad accident. Is there anything new in that, or a brutal murder; they are common enough. Suicides are so numerous that they are getting to be positively vulgar. Absconding cashiers are as thick as creditors after a suspension. Only old stories with new names, that is all," said Edwin, and he subsided into a quiet state, feeling that what he said was unanswerable.

The men sat in silence, broken only by the ticking of the old-fashioned clock that stood in its dignified position in the corner of the room.

"You have changed almightily, Ed," said old Captain Hardwick, U. S. N., whose retirement had recently taken place, and who in lieu of anything better to do inhabited the club with a constancy only equalled by the ardor in which he made love to every chorus girl he could. "You were a far different fellow

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when I last saw you. You remember it well, I know. I was up the Mediterranean, and you took pity on my unsophisticated nature and initiated me into the wild dissipation of southern Italy. From you manner tonight, one might take you for the head of a family, burdened with the vast responsibility that goes, so they say, with that condition."

"Keep it up, old salt, you can't annoy me. In fact, I rather like your curiosity, for it tells me that you feel interested. There is nothing more gratifying to a man than that."

"As for me," broke in the captain, "there was a time when I thought there was something in this world for me more than three square meals a day and a comfortable bed. I might as well be a barbarian in the woods."

"No one knows the misery I have had," said Edwin. "My own folks do not dream of it, save that they know that I have a genius for unhappiness. Did it ever strike you that the world was not the place for a sensitive man? If a man has a skin as thick and as rough as that of a rhinoceros, he may not feel the stings that are cast about on all sides, but if he has not, he writhes and suffers the torments of the damned."

"The world is all right. It is only the manner in which you regard life," said the captain. "Now in my case, I came to the conclusion when very young, that as I had only one life to live, I was going to live it to suit only one person, and that was the first person singular. The struggle for fame never bothered me after that. I found that when I cast aside all thoughts of the future and lived from day to day, I was vastly more happy than when I bothered my poor head with thoughts of what was to be. I believe that no matter what you do or don't do, that your life will frame itself in the end as it has been allotted you. A rebuff means aught but good, as it proves, and that which you seek for most, and fail to secure, is often a fortunate thing for you.

"I once thought that I would not be happy unless I secured

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a certain young lady to be my wife. How I worried, poor devil! I lost flesh, patience and friends, too, for all that, and what did it amount to? The young lady coolly informed me that she could never think of marrying a sailor, and was wedded inside of a year to a fellow that had more money than brains, and who abused her so shamefully that it was carried to the divorce courts, furnishing such delicious reading for the public that they were sorry when it ended."

"A man's actions are more often misconstrued than rightfully accepted," said Edwin. "I once knew a man, a dashing young fellow by inclination and nature, whose life would have been a happy one had he but withdrawn from the influence that surrounded him and kept him down. He was as jovial a chap as you would want to meet, at times when he forgot his condition and appeared in his true light. Then there seemed to fall a thick black cloud that surrounded him and enveloped his brightness. He was regarded as queer, and many shook their heads knowingly and said, 'He is not all right in the head.' But he was. His whole-souled nature and warm heart shone through his bright blue eyes, which, if sad at times, were the reflection of his inner self. The life he led in fancy. The life he would have led had it been his fate to have done so.

"He worked day and night, depriving himself of the world and the good-fellowship of those around him, that he might not appear before them in the light of an impostor.

"He could not make merry so he would not dampen their enjoyment with the knowledge of his life, and so, surrounded on sides with what he most sought for he could but be a spectator at the play of life in which he could so successfully have taken a prominent part.

"As I have said," continued Edwin, "his life was a struggle, a fierce fight against himself. He saw men he would dearly have liked to have called his friends, regard him as little more

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than an imbecile. He heard remarks made about him that he could have set aright if he but chose to speak, but if he had, it would have thrown the search light of the public upon a past and present that was as hideous to him as the thought of hell to the poor ignorant bigoted devil struggling under the weight of his religion that bears him to the grave in misery.

"What was the cause of all this you ask? A simple thing, the simplest thing in all the world, a word of only five letters, still one that signifies everything that is good, everything that is evil, everything that is refined and everything that is degraded. MONEY.

" 'Money, the root of all evil.' Rather, 'Money, the want of which is the greatest evil of mankind.'

"His was a simple story. Born of a family that for generations had been the possessors of wealth, he embodied the delicate tastes and temperament that come from a long period of refinement. When very young the wealth that had passed from father to son faded away and there was left little else but a name honored and respected by all.

"Speculation was the cause, the effect damnable. From being a united family his became dismembered as though by magic, and as years went by, influences were brought to bear that carried him lower and lower down the social ladder until he became hidden in the throng at the base.

"It was then that woman, lovely woman, appeared upon the scene and added to the impetus that stopped little short of degradation."

"Where is he today?" asked the captain who had listened intently.

"Still struggling in the mire, as he always will have to, weighed down by a handicap that he cannot overcome."

"You talk as though you had had some such experience."

"It is the only teacher."

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"Well this is a funeral gathering," said the captain, "I must say. Here we have sat like as many old women staring at the floor and never once thinking that perhaps it would be a good thing to 'smile.' What is it going to be Leonard? Not drinking? That's bad; nothing like a 'nip' once in a while to cheer you up. Come have one with me it will dispel that somber mood you are in."

"No thanks, Captain," said Edwin, "I think I will go to my hotel!"

"See you tomorrow old boy!" called the captain after him. "That chap is a queer one" he remarked as he buried himself in his paper.

* * * * *

The wind howled dismally through the night. Edwin as he tossed upon his bed heard it and with every moan he felt that the elements were but expressing his feelings. During the night he lost himself for a while, only to be awakened by the sowing wind and to lie and turn over in his mind the events of the day and try to decide what he was to do.

Would Amie do as he wanted her to? He thought she would not. If he were to ask her to give up all and go with him. No! she would not listen to such an arrangement. Listen; had he not the right to command, that she not only listen but obey his wish? Would Edwina think of him as she ought? He felt that his sin was too great for him to bear; yet his cold heart throbbed with joy at the thought of the happiness that might be his had he but the chance to grasp it.

"Why should I live my life for others? Why should I not consider myself? Who would think of me? Who does think of me? Then why should I be backward in demanding my rights?"

He closed his eyes and there danced before him the figures of the past. Rapidly they went, so fast that they were but the flashes of light in passing.

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The baby on the floor strives to catch the sunbeam as it glides over the carpet. With its tiny hand the infant tugs at the line of light, and crawls about upon its chubby knees persistent in its task. But the sun shines brightly and its glare is steady. As it moves across the floor the baby cannot grasp it. Always in sight, but not to be captured. How many men are there, that are like the infant—trying to catch a sunbeam. How like the baby they are thwarted in their attempt. The sunbeam passes slowly across their lives until it fades away, their object unattained.

Edwin reached beneath his pillow and pressed the spring of his watch. It chimed the hour 4.30, and still some time before morning. He struck a light and slipping on his dressing gown sat beside the grate fire that was but a few smoldering embers.

Often in the stillness of the night he had awakened from a deep sleep. All that was visible was the faint light from the street lamp as it flickered in the wind and cast its unsteady light upon the wall.

His thoughts were somber ones and turned to the time when the grim monster death should claim him for his own. The spectre was before him in all his hideousness.

He wondered how he would come. Would he suddenly feel a pang of pain, lose consciousness and fade from life, or would he linger on his bed for months.

His bed! Ah, what bed? For who could tell what was in store for him in the long or short life that was his.

Would he be attended by a loving wife, whose care he was? A wife! What kind of a wife? Would she be young when he was to say good-bye? Or would she be a comely matron with children—his children about her? Feverish with unrest he walked about the room.

* * * * *

The sun shone brightly in at the window and warmed the

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room with its cheerful glow, Edwin awoke with a start, his brow was damp and cold. He shook himself to make sure that he was awake and rubbed his eyes. His head was aching.

"What a ghastly dream I have had," he exclaimed. "There is no escape for me, I wonder if the servants are up and about." He rang the bell and John who was passing in the hall stopped and rapped.

"There is a small decanter of brandy on the side board," said Edwin, "bring it to me and a bottle of soda; we will see if I can't shake off this feeling.

"It is a lovely day, I wonder if there will be a wedding after all?" said he with a hoarse laugh as he kicked the hassock at his feet across the room.

The decanter was beside him and he drank freely. There came a rap on the door. It was the man to inform him that breakfast was ready. Edwin dressed hurriedly.

Grace was seated behind the coffee pot and Mr. Atwood's good-natured face beamed from the opposite side. Phil was waiting for his uncle to finish as he had planned a drive.

"You are late, Edwin," remarked Grace. "How did you rest?"

"I had a wretched night."

"You don't look it, uncle," remarked Mamie.

"That's right, Mamie, stand up for your uncle Edwin. When Phil is married you will have him all to yourself."

"Your ride with me will fix you all right," said Phil.

"To be sure I had forgotten that!"

"Stay away as long as you please only be back in time for dinner," called Grace after them as they left.

"Doesn't uncle act queer this morning?" said Mamie.

"Queer," said her mother.

"He seems to be a man haunted with something in the past."

"You should try to make him forget it, and take more interest in the future."

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"I do hope you can get him to stay. It will be so jolly now Phil is going."

It was late in the afternoon when Edwin and Phil returned, they had been off on a long drive and Edwin looked even more pale than ever.

"How do I look for a bridegroom?" asked Phil playfully of his mother, "are you proud of your boy?"

"God bless you my son. I hope you will always be as happy in your married life as your father and I have been."

"Thanks, mother, I don't see how it can be otherwise with Edwina! What is your opinion uncle?"

"You are a very fortunate boy," said he with a strained expression upon his face.

* * * * *

The great church was ablaze with light. It shone through the stained glass of the windows out upon the chill night the red glow glistening on the pavement.

The canopy was surrounded by a motley crowd of eager people, who in spite of the cold stood watching the carriages come and go as they deposited their freight at the church. Within the scene was a brilliant one. The chancel was buried in flowers. Tropical plants in large and small pots were scattered in profusion so that the effect was that of a huge conservatory.

Chrysanthemums large as buckets waved from their stalks, the rich cream and white a strong contrast to the green of the ferns.

The church was well filled when Edwin arrived. He had staid behind until all had gone, saying that he was not ready but would be there on time.

He was shown to a seat well down toward the front. As he sat down he found that he was in the one next to that of Mr. and Mrs. Carleton.

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He felt his heart thump against his side as he saw her pleading glance. He dared not look again. He felt he should suffocate. Wiping the perspiration from his brow he gazed at the bank of flowers before him.

"Dare you do it? Will you do it?" he heard ringing in his ears. "Do it by all means!" came a voice so loud and strong that he started and glanced hurriedly about in fear that others might have heard. If they had their faces did not show it, and he settled back satisfied.

"You are ruining their lives!" he heard in a soft pleading voice that he knew so well. He turned to where Amie sat, but no, she was talking with her husband.

"Are you happy? Have you been happy?" again came the voice.

Then as though from a trumpet came the cry.

"You are a coward!"

Edwin felt his head reeling and leaned forward with his face in his hands. He dared not place them over his ears though he would have given half he was worth to have done so, for loud and long came the taunting cry:

"You are a brave man! You who have sworn to have your wish gratified! Will you then weaken at the last moment when by a single word you can gain your wish?"

The organ's slow notes swelled out upon the air and every head was turned toward the door as the wedding procession came down the aisle.

"Do not weaken! Do not weaken! Be satisfied! Have your wish and spare no one! Have you been spared? Then why should you spare others?"

The man sat with his face rigid as marble. His gloves split open in the palms, where his hands had been tightly clutched.

Amie from her position watched him.

The young people were at the altar, the minister was read-

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ing the service, the man sat bending forward, waiting with an eager manner.

"Don't fail now or all is lost!" whispered the voice, the minister paused: "If there be anyone present who knows why this man and this woman should not be wed, let him now speak, or for ever after keep his peace."

The moment was an awful one for Amie, and she gasped as she saw the man before her start to his feet and stand erect, and with wild eyes glance from right to left.

Edwin saw Amie bending toward him and he sank on the cushions with a groan.

The ceremony proceeded uninterrupted and amid the strains of the organ the wedded pair left the church. Friends crowded about Amie, whose face was even whiter than the gown her daughter wore.

Few noticed the man as he stole quietly away out into the night. All was confusion without; carriages and pedestrians blocked the way. Buttoning his coat about him he entered a cab that was standing near and was driven away.

At the reception Amie stood beside her daughter and watched eagerly for the face she most wanted to see.

It grew late and the crowd had thinned. Young Mr. and Mrs. Atwood had gone upon their wedding trip, with the best wishes of all, save one whose absence they had remarked.

Amie and Grace as they sat talking of the evening's event spoke of Edwin's action.

"I wonder where he went?" said Mamie, coming to her mother's side.

Long years after she recalled the evening and the question she had asked. Her mother had died soon after, and with her father she sat talking of her brother's wedding, and of the mysterious disappearance of her uncle Edwin.

Nothing has ever been seen or heard of him from that day to this.

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A FATAL GLANCE.

BY LILLIAN LAWRENCE.

"The defendant is insane, and the court decides that he shall be confined to an asylum until cured. The District Attorney will make out the certificate of confinement."

The sentence was not in any way what had been expected and there spread throughout the court room a suppressed murmur. The court officer rapped with his gavel and cried, "Hats off in court!" for, in the excitement of the moment, I had put mine on, and stood as one dazed. The feelings of a valet are not to be considered, at least that is the conclusion that I have arrived at, and when a man of my age forms a conclusion it is hard to dispel it.

The prisoner was a nervous appearing man, clad in the height of fashion, his Prince Albert coat fitting him like a glove, and his trousers creased to a nicety. In his whole manner, with the exception of the restless movement of his eyes, that shifted from one side of the room to the other, there was nothing to indicate, to my mind, that he realized the position he was in, or the enormity of the offence he stood convicted of.

The counsel he had employed had brought forward witnesses who had proven by testimony that the man had a decided taint of insanity in his blood. It had been traced through two generations and made the friends of the prisoner feel rather creepish when they realized how they had been with him on many occasions, when if his mind had taken the freak, they and not my master, would have been cold in death.

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It was a case where the District Attorney had grasped the intention of the counsel for the defence, and had taken the matter out of his hands by forcing the court to declare the prisoner insane upon the testimony of Government experts, engaged to inquire into the matter. It thus shut off any avenue of escape for the man that might have been laid open for him to at some future time regain his liberty.

The circumstances that led to the deed, for it was a case of murder, were most peculiar. In the first place James Hardy, my master, did not have an enemy in the world. He travelled a great deal, and I was constantly packing his grip and mine for trips to New York. It was upon one of these trips that he met his death.

I shall never forget the first time I saw my master. I had been recommended to him by a friend of his, who had been my master for some years, but owing to a "slump" in his holdings he had concluded that he could not afford so expensive a luxury as myself. You see I explain most minutely. But I was speaking of James Hardy.

He had told me to come to see him at his chambers and I went. He opened the door himself in answer to my ring, and even in the dim light of the hallway I was struck with what had aroused the diseased mind of the man who caused his death. The expression of his eyes was that of a stare or more like that which would be produced upon the eyes of a person being choked.

The full round eyeballs protruded from the sockets, and seemed to look you through and through. It did not take me long to get accustomed to them, however, for they were blue and pleasant when you watched them intently. He had a pleasing voice, and was a pleasant fellow; a bachelor, wealthy, and one accustomed to being obeyed in his slightest wish. I had been engaged in the spring. It was in December that we were in New York. My master was to be married on New Year's eve to a Miss Livingston, who lived in Philadelphia.

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One evening I had put him into his clothes, assisted him with his opera cloak, and congratulated myself that there were few men-servants who could do better work than I had just accomplished. My master had invited a friend to go to the opera with him that night, and if he had been on time, I should not be telling this story, nor would I be without a master.

Mr. Hardy had lighted a cigar, and was walking back and forth through the long corridor at the Westminster, at one end of which was a mirror. As he reached the end, he would survey himself in the glass with a self-satisfied expression, then turn and walk away. He glanced at the clock, at his watch, and then the door, in an impatient manner. He had walked some minutes when he passed a corridor leading to a suite of rooms, the door of one being open. As he passed, a man came from the room. He was in his shirt sleeves. As my master met him, he looked up and walked on.

"Who are you staring at?" he heard the man, whose face was flushed and angry, exclaim.

"Staring?" asked my master, "why, my good man, I am not staring at anyone." With that he continued his walk. On his way back the man was there, evidently having waited for him.

"What! you still here? Get out!" he cried, addressing my master. "Get out of this hall."

"Sir," replied my master, "I do not intend to leave until I am ready. I have as much right here as you or any other guest of the house."

"We will see," exclaimed the other, and dashed back into his room.

Oh! if my master's friend had but arrived at that moment, all would have been well, but he didn't, and my master being somewhat stubborn, and who if he had concluded previously to change his walk, would not have done so after the remark of the man, strolled back to where the mirror stood. He turned

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and neared the fatal corner. The man came toward him, his eyes snapping. "Are you going to get out?" he cried.

"No-o," drawled my master, stroking his blond moustache.

Crack! A thin cloud of smoke, a fall, a smothered cry, and a shirt front that showed a small red spot, which grew in size until the red blood streamed down upon the floor. My master had fallen.

In an instant the hotel was in a state of wild confusion. The clerk sent a porter for the police, and the friend who had arrived took a cab for the office of a skilful surgeon who lived near by. My master had fallen near the elevator, and with tender care was lifted into it, borne to his room, and placed upon his bed.

The doctor came quickly, and tearing open the clothes examined the wound. My master was pale and his eyes had a peculiar expression which haunts me to this day. He watched the doctor closely with clenched teeth, as he worked. With a shake of his head the surgeon looked at the wounded man. "A serious matter, my friend," said he.

"Yes," replied my master as he placed his finger over the wound. "Why, I must have been shot with a small cannon." A sad smile spread over his face.

Below stairs, the scene was somewhat different. A man in his shirt-sleeves was sitting on a couch between two porters, who held him, while on the table lay the weapon, an ugly looking Derringer, of antique design.

My master realized that he was dying, and beckoned his friend to his side. Now a valet should not tell secrets, nor chat of his master's affairs. Most assuredly not of his love affairs, but I am not a valet now, and am privileged to talk. Miss Livingston and Mr. Hardy had in a joking way, vied in trying to secure each other for Christmas. Miss Livingston wished my master to come to Philadelphia for the holidays, and he had

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tried to have her come to New York. So, when he told his friend to wire his bethrothed that he had been shot, and to come at once, she, knowing him to be a great joker, thought it a ruse to cause her acquiescence to his desire.

A dispatch was sent, the trains were watched, time being figured as to what hour she would receive the message, and what train she would take. I was sent to meet her. The train rolled into the station but she was not there. With heavy heart I went back to my master's bedside. I had been told by the doctor that at most he had but a day to live. When I entered alone, he asked, "Is she below?"

"No, sir," I replied, "she did not come."

All was silent. His eyes were closed. Turning to me he said, "Write," and he dictated this dispatch:

"If you care to see me again alive, come to New York as soon as you can take a train. I am dying."

"Now sign my name," he added, and I did so.

I felt that the woman he was to marry would soon arrive, but the night was one of horror to me. The man's fever rose, and at times he talked wildly of "woman, inconstant woman," a thing he used to revile when others grew pessimistic. The night wore on, trains came, and still she was not there. With a weary sigh, my master took from beneath his pillow a packet, and tearing it in little pieces, he motioned for me to throw them away. The bits of broken sealing-wax aroused my curiosity. It was his will A generous sum had been bequeathed to her he loved, but that she would never receive.

"She cares no more for me than for her dog. Well, perhaps it is better so."

Those were the last words he ever spoke. His great heart had broken. My master lay cold in death.

It was daylight. The undertaker had been busy, for the body was to be sent to his family in Boston. A cab drew up

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before the hotel, and Miss Livingston alighted. She was very pale when I met her in the ladies' parlor. "How is he?" she had exclaimed as I entered.

It was hard for me to do, hard for me to say. My tongue felt large, and my mouth was parched.

"Dead."

With a cry she staggered back. "Too late, my God, how can I bear it?"

I did the best I could to calm her, but it was of little use. Such grief I had never seen, nor do I wish to see again. Her story was pathetic. She had received the first message, and regarded it as a joke, but when the second came, she started at once, and would have been in time but for fate, which was against her. She drove to the station to catch a late train for New York. The clock stood two minutes before the hour of starting. There was a delay in the ticket office, and running down the station she saw the train about to start. A crusty fellow stood at the gate. Clang! went the gong, and the gate swung to. Entreaties, prayers, tears, were in vain. She stood impotent in rage.

I went on with the body and followed my master to the grave. Then, my work being over, I left the city, and am now—well, I hear that Miss Livingston is to wed the friend of my former master, and perhaps I may not be long out of a berth. Who can tell?

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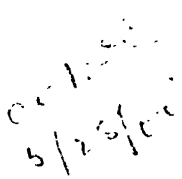

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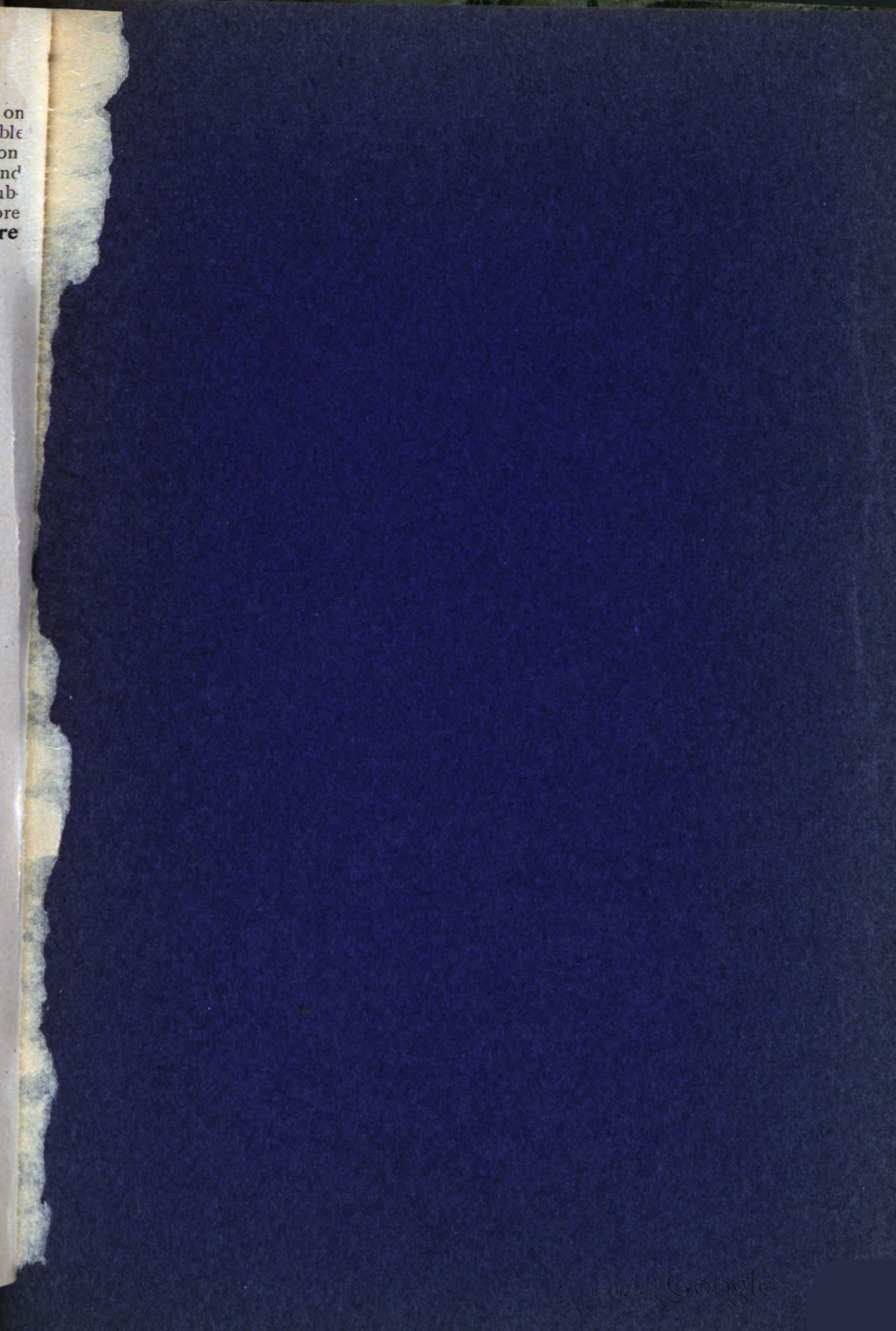

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